UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1998/647/Add.1
28 July 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL CONCERNING THE SITUATION IN ABKHAZIA, GEORGIA

Addendum

1. Following the issuance of my report of 14 July 1998 concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (S/1998/647), the second high-level meeting between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides was held at Geneva, from 23 to 25 July 1998, under the chairmanship of my Special Representative, Mr. Liviu Bota. On 25 July both sides adopted the attached concluding statement (see annex).

2. Also attached is a statement made on behalf of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General accompanying the concluding statement (see appendix).

98-21987 (E) 280798 280798

/...

Annex

[Original: Russian]

Concluding statement on the results of the second meeting of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, held at Geneva from 23 to 25 July 1998

1. From 23 to 25 July 1998 the second meeting of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides took place in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of representatives of the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the States belonging to the group of Friends of the Secretary-General, namely France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as observers. Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), also participated in the parts of the discussion relating to their work.

2. During the meeting an exchange of views took place on the following agenda items:

- Review of the state of the negotiations on the main aspects of a comprehensive settlement of the conflict and identification of areas where concrete political progress could be made;
- Elaboration of effective mechanisms for preserving the ceasefire regime and concrete guarantees of the non-resumption of hostilities;
- Problems of the return of refugees and displaced persons;
- Efforts in the economic, humanitarian and social areas.

3. The participants at the meeting renewed their support for the proposals of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to strengthen the involvement of the United Nations in the peacekeeping process aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement. They recognize that the process begun on the initiative of the Secretary-General is continuing and should be stepped up.

4. The parties welcomed the beginning of the implementation of the programme of action and the work of the machinery on which agreement had been reached at the previous meeting in Geneva, including the establishment of the Coordination Council and the three working groups within its framework. At its meeting on 18 December 1997, the Coordination Council adopted the statute for its operation.

At the same time it was noted that the machinery established in Geneva has not yet been fully activated. Several key provisions of the concluding statement adopted in Geneva and of decisions of the Coordination Council have

still not been implemented. The parties indicated the need for the full implementation of prior decisions.

5. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Georgia, the representatives of the Russian Federation, as facilitator, OSCE, and the member States of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General expressed concern that despite energetic efforts to intensify the peace process, the parties are still far from agreement on key aspects of a settlement. They stressed that the major responsibility for resolution of the problems between the parties lies with the parties to the conflict themselves. They called upon the parties to the conflict to refrain from any action which might undermine the efforts which are being undertaken, to do everything possible to support the peace process, and to demonstrate the necessary political will so that concrete results can be achieved on fundamental issues.

6. The participants stressed the importance of bilateral contacts and direct dialogue between the parties at various levels and in various spheres, including the work of the Bilateral Joint Coordination Commission on Practical Issues, which are an integral part of the peace process and must be supported. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Georgia, the Russian Federation, OSCE and the group of Friends of the Secretary-General reaffirmed that they will continue to render all possible assistance to the parties in achieving mutually acceptable agreements.

7. The parties reaffirmed their adherence to the Tbilisi Declaration of 14 August 1997, in particular:

- the determination to put an end to the conflict which has divided them and to restore peaceful relations and mutual respect;

- the conviction that the time has come to embark on a policy of peace and well-being and to act jointly with dignity and mutual tolerance in a spirit of compromise and reconciliation;

- the commitment not to resort to the use of force to resolve the problems dividing them and not under any circumstances to permit a renewal of bloodshed. Any differences will be resolved exclusively by peaceful and political means, through negotiations and consultations.

8. The participants at the meeting are seriously concerned about the situation with regard to security in the conflict zone, which has recently sharply deteriorated. The parties gave their assessments of the events which have taken place in the security zone, and exchanged views on ways of resolving the existing situation. Consultations on these issues will be continued. (The positions of the sides are annexed.)

9. The parties stressed the need for the immediate implementation of the decision taken by the Coordination Council to elaborate a mechanism in which the representatives of the sides, the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and/or the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States ("the CIS peacekeeping force") might participate for the investigation and prevention of violations of the Moscow Agreement on a

Ceasefire and Separation of Forces of 14 May 1994 and of subversive terrorist acts carried out in the conflict zone.

10. The parties again reaffirmed their agreement to refrain from hostile propaganda towards each other and to take measures to promote the establishment of an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding. The participants at the meeting gratefully acknowledged the invitation of the Government of Greece to hold a special meeting of the parties this year in Athens to elaborate measures to strengthen mutual trust and understanding as envisaged in the Protocol of the third session of the Coordination Council.

11. The parties again reaffirmed their previous commitment regarding the right of refugees and displaced persons to voluntary return to the places of their former permanent residence.

They held a comprehensive discussion of the practical issues linked to the return of the refugees and decided to continue work on these questions. (The position of the sides are annexed.)

12. The parties reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring the freedom of movement and security of humanitarian aid workers so that they can gain access to those in need and provide assistance to them.

13. The participants at the meeting noted the importance of coordination of the activities of UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force for the stabilization of the situation in the conflict zone and for the prevention of armed conflicts.

ANNEX

Positions of the sides on paragraph 8

The position of the Georgian side

The Georgian side condemns the hostilities and acts of violence which took place in the Gali district in May 1998, as a result of which, as is noted in the report of the United Nations Secretary-General (S/1998/647), approximately 40,000 people from the Gali district had to seek refuge for the second time on the other side of the Inguri River, and the international community had to witness how its assistance and efforts went up in flames, when houses that had been constructed at a cost of more than $2 million out of UNHCR funds were deliberately set on fire in order to expel people from their home areas.

The Georgian side believes that these actions are a manifestation of a new wave of ethnic cleansing directed at the Georgian population of Abkhazia.

It notes with regret that the situation in the Gali district today still remains unstable and tense.

The position of the Abkhaz side

As a result of the armed conflict provoked by the Georgian side in May 1998 in the Gali district of Abkhazia, and also of the continuing illegal actions of the 'White Legion' and 'Forest Brothers' terrorist and subversive groups, and of the continued laying of mines and other acts of violence, causing casualties first and foremost among the Abkhaz militia and the peacekeeping force, and also among local inhabitants, refugees and displaced persons, UNOMIG personnel and other international personnel working in Abkhazia, the situation in the region has deteriorated and is a cause for serious concern.

Positions of the sides on paragraph 11

The position of the Georgian side

The Georgian side believes that certain conditions are necessary for the implementation of the process of the speedy return of the refugees and displaced persons. To this end it proposed the establishment of a working group with the participation of representatives of the sides, the United Nations, the Russian Federation, and the member States of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General to formulate and implement a plan for the voluntary and safe return, with dignity, of the refugees and displaced persons, first and foremost to the Gali district (within the old borders).

At the same time, measures for international guarantees of the continuity of the process of the return of refugees and displaced persons and for ensuring their safety in the places of their return should be formulated and implemented.

In immediate and direct linkage with the process of the stable and organized return of the refugees and displaced persons, first and foremost to the Gali district (within the old borders), measures for the economic rehabilitation of the region and the normalization of the border and customs regimes should be implemented.

At the same time, measures should be undertaken to invite international organizations and donor countries to allocate resources for the process of the return of the refugees and displaced persons and for the restoration of the economy of Abkhazia, as recommended by the United Nations Needs Assessment Mission.

The Georgian side stressed that the real return of refugees and displaced persons is possible only on condition of the precise determination of the territory and time-frame for their return, concrete measures guaranteeing the security of the returnees and the continuity of this process, and also mechanisms for its implementation.

The refusal of the Abkhaz side to accept those necessary conditions points to the purely declarative nature of its statements concerning agreement to the return of the refugees and displaced persons.

The position of the Abkhaz side

When the process of the organized return of the refugees to the Gali district begins, measures shall be taken to lift the restrictions established by the decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of 19 December 1994 and by the decision of the Heads of State of CIS of 19 January 1996. In this connection, the Abkhaz side believes that there is a need for the speedy signing of the draft agreement on peace and guarantees for the prevention of armed confrontation and protocol on the return of refugees to the Gali district and measures for economic rehabilitation prepared during the June Georgian-Abkhaz consultations.

Appendix

Statement on behalf of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General

The Geneva Process did survive the tragic events of May 1998. This is the major outcome of this meeting.

However, we are unfortunately still far from a political settlement of the conflict. It is essential that the Parties commit themselves to the search for a political solution within the framework of the United Nations, making use of the mechanism established in November 1997.

The international community, and the group of Friends, expect the parties to come to terms. Wherever the Friends can be helpful in these efforts, they stand ready.

It is important to start the return of refugees immediately and under safe and secure conditions.

The Friends reiterate their deep concern regarding the security of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and underline the need to continue to make further arrangements in this field. In this regard, they urge the Secretary-General of the United Nations to keep the matter under constant review, in particular the self-protection unit and other options as appropriate. They call on the parties and the Russian Federation to support the continuation of the peacekeeping operation of the peacekeeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States in order to secure favourable and peaceful conditions for the continuation of negotiations to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

We demand that the parties provide increased security for the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and other international personnel. We welcome the inclusion in the concluding statement of a provision on freedom of movement for humanitarian aid workers.

The Friends thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for steering this meeting and they look forward to our next meeting within the Geneva framework.